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# SEA LETTER

OF THE NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

Summer 1979  
Number 29



Star of India - An Appreciation

by Karl Kortum



Three years ago the first successful ship preservation on the Pacific Coast celebrated its 50th anniversary.

(Fifty years, come to think of it, is a quarter of the nation's life. The Bicentennial was also celebrated in 1976.)

Of all the historic ships preserved here and there in the country, the STAR OF INDIA best demonstrated how to celebrate the fifty years of extra life that the preservation process had given her — on the Fourth of July she towed to sea and set sail again in the Pacific Ocean.

"Rise tacks and sheets and mains'l haul!"

The STAR OF INDIA was towed to San Diego from San Francisco in 1926 for service as a museum ship. She was the first significant merchant square rigger to be saved. When she departed Fortmann Basin in Alameda, the STAR OF INDIA left behind the STAR OF ALASKA (now BALCLUTHA) and sixteen other STARS, all but a couple of the smaller ones still voyaging to Alaska each year.

The STAR OF INDIA was not immediately treasured by San Diego. In fact, she fell on hard times that stretched out for more than three decades. There was little interest in the ship; funds were not forthcoming for her upkeep. Gradually she deteriorated. She played the role of H.M.S. PINAFORE and netted \$4.85. A barge crashed into her in a gale; the

INDIA broke adrift and floated in the bay. She was in a remote spot — for a while one of her night watchmen turned her into a floating whore-house. She appeared, dimly, in the motion picture *I Cover the Waterfront* — the book from which the movie was made was laid in San Diego.

In World War II the Navy crudely cut down the STAR OF INDIA's rigging with acetylene torches until only the lower masts stood to prevent Navy planes, which swarmed in the area, from hitting the topgallant masts. The old emigrant ship began to look old, rusty, and unloved. But she had one inamorato who would not give up.

Herewith is published a tribute to the ship, *STAR OF INDIA — An Appreciation*, describing her as she was in 1959, still intrinsically magnificent, but at the low ebb of her years. This was originally published in *The American Neptune* in 1962 in slightly different form. To it is now added — on the premise of a prophet not being honored in his own town — a salute to Jerry MacMullen. Jerry, the author of *Paddle Wheel Days in California* and *They Came by Sea*, co-author with Jack McNairn of the durable *Ships of the Redwood Coast*, is the most modest of men. In his own book, *Star of India, The Log of an Iron Ship*, he remains a shadowy figure.



Cover: In preparation for lifting out the rusted foremast, rigger Jack Dickerhoff has chopped away half the lanyards from this gang of rigging. Only two ragged shrouds remain. Above: The mainmast is unstepped, probably for the first time in ninety-nine years.



## STAR OF INDIA — An Appreciation

by Karl Kortum

My first sight of her was through a lumber yard, not inappropriate in view of her years for J. J. Moore & Co. The old bark, just six years short of being a century old, looked dark and ancient, and as I walked down abreast of her, I was confronting an antiquity in hull form that I had seen in pictures but never in real life. There was a feeling of the 1850's or even 1840's about her dumpy shape with its lack of sheer, low beakhead and squarish stern.

I went aboard and the feeling was intensified. What a privilege, I thought, to get off a United Airlines plane in San Diego and quietly saunter aboard the latest thing in naval architecture for the year 1863. It is a privilege that will be vouchsafed me (with luck) maybe three times more in my life — aboard CUTTY SARK, CHARLES W. MORGAN, and VICTORY. I had the feeling here, in old San Diego, that I was getting mighty close to Dana, and indeed STAR OF INDIA was built only twenty-eight years after his spell on the beach here with the Kanaka hide-curing crew and the smart ALERT finally taking him away.

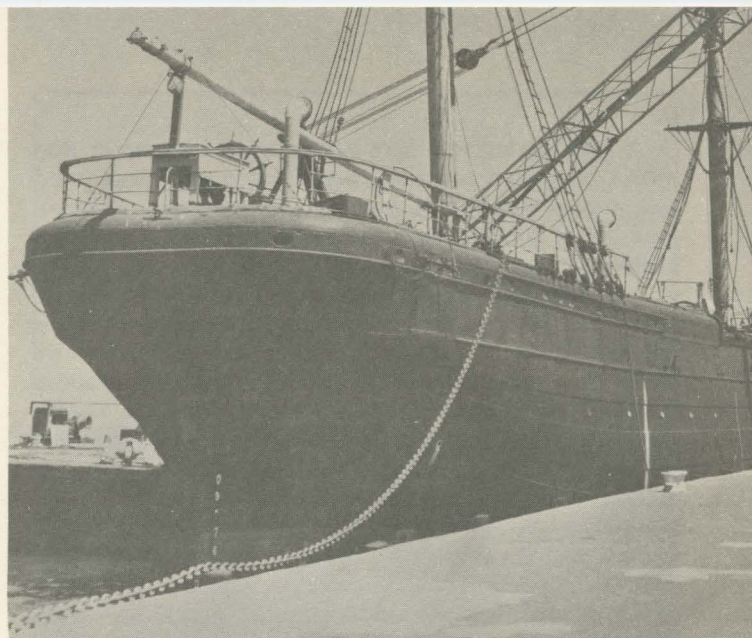
Here was a narrow little ship with truly a "waist" in the old time meaning of the word — an area confined by remarkably high iron bulwarks on either side. I discovered that she lacked a full foot of her original wooden topgallant rail at that — this deep waist was undoubtedly for the comfort of the immigrants. Sockets for awning stanchions were fitted in the pin rail.

In the center of this area rose the stocky bole of the lower mast (a remarkably short spar) and abaft in an antiquity of teak and brass that took my breath away. This was the main fife rail — much larger than the same fitting on BALCLUTHA and arched around the after side of the mast with turned stanchions large and small supporting it and a multitude of sheaves let into its base. The scores for these sheaves were all set off with brass castings and the look of the thing put me in mind of jeers, ephroes, and other bits of vanished gear from the navy of Charles II.

I walked forward and came to a deckhouse built by the Alaska Packers maybe fifty years ago and by now rich with an aura of its own. Inside it was beamed, low, worn, and hadn't smelled paint in a quarter of a century. If ever this old bark were to be restored, it would be well to let this anachronism be — it is an exhibit from the days of Chinamen traveling north and times when the Alaska Packers fleet numbered more wooden square-riggers than iron ones like this.

Forward of that was the tiny fore hatch — like the main and mizzen hatches with a coaming little more than a foot high. The fo'c'sle head was low and it was necessary to duck to get under it. A row of blocks were strung up under there and I was envious of a couple of the more ancient types. Amidships was a Providence windlass made in this country — the more I thought about it the more I was convinced that the log windlass we have on the main floor of the museum in San Francisco probably came from this old EUTERPE, and not from the more modern STAR OF FRANCE, as we have it labeled. (I have heard that it originated on one or the other of these two vessels.)\*

The fo'c'sle head itself was dominated by a Providence



STAR OF INDIA was one of three iron square riggers built on the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea. She was originally an emigrant ship for New Zealand. A main passenger cabin under the long poop is one of her chief glories to this day.

patent capstan with a cast base built to accommodate a messenger chain from the donkey engine that J. J. Moore must have installed. (When I got back to San Francisco I found the capstan and windlass advertised as a unit in the American Windlass Co. catalogue of 1894.) Forward of the capstan was a large cruciform mooring bitt which rather surprised me, but which shows in the picture of the ship in her prime at Port Chalmers, New Zealand. This picture arrived last week from Wellington and I brought it with me to present to Jerry MacMullen.

I walked aft, admiring the touch that deadeyes provide above those strange high bulwarks. No modern bottle screws here, after the fashion of our BALCLUTHA, twenty-three years younger. Everywhere there were details to please a maritime antiquarian — the fore sheet bitts being square in cross section instead of round, the S-shaped forging supporting the outer end of the boatskids was the way Gordon Grant drew it on CITY OF MADRAS.

Up on the poop I was struck by its narrowness compared with BALCLUTHA—STAR OF INDIA seemed half instead of being three quarters the BALCLUTHA's size. The reason for this is the half-round that surrounds the poop and narrows it in from the ship's side. Heavy forged straps, formed in a curve, were riveted to this half-round to anchor another row of deadeyes on either side. Harold Sommer has always urged half seriously that someday we have plates rolled and equip BALCLUTHA with a half-round — "Those iron and steel ships just aren't right without it. . . ."

\* The newspaper account of the launching of EUTERPE states she had a "patent windlass" made by John Wilson & Co. of Liverpool, who also supplied patent capstans and patent pumps to the ship. The original survey (1864) made at Ramsay, Isle of Man, states that her windlass was "greenheart."

These accounts seem to indicate a wooden "log" windlass with patent iron fittings for the pump brake mechanism that turned it.

Recent correspondence with England has revealed that STAR OF FRANCE was also outfitted with a log windlass. Our present assumption is that the windlass is from her. At one end is a large, primitive sprocket, apparently for a drive from the donkey engine, that appears to be original. EUTERPE was not originally fitted with an engine.



A long skylight up here betokened the passenger ship with a big saloon beneath it needing daylight. There was a tall, turned binnacle, a graceful companionway of heavy teak but of compact size, and aft a wheel with a wheelbox replaced at some later period in the ship's life.

I returned to the main deck and entered the poop extension fitted by the Alaska Packers. In the middle of it was the mizzen hatch — the tiniest of all, seemingly about five by six feet at the most. There was a display here of various maritime artifacts, many fine specimens from the vessel's early life consisting of photographs of her early masters and various documents as well as some good maritime gear in the smaller sizes. It was ranged around the room on shelves, badly displayed.

I entered the saloon itself and was assailed by the story it had to tell of early Victorian passengers traveling to India and the Colonies. It was three times the size of BALCLUTHA's saloon, a long table down the center, space surrounding that for the passengers and their tiny cabins flanking it on either side. The mizzenmast rose through it, the paneling lacked the elegance of the later Victorian, yet it was rather quaint. Overhead was the long skylight and still surviving as an end panel a colored representation of Euterpe, Muse of Music. Doors led out of this room into a cuddy aft, each door having an etched glass panel in a floral pattern. This little room was again paneled in dark hardwood to the pattern of the saloon. A large stateroom on the starboard quarter contained a large shelf-like bunk with ornamental brass railing on turned stanchions; there were oval portholes.

The 'tween decks were spacious and with head room equal to BALCLUTHA's — surprising in a smaller ship until one remembers the emigrant trade in which she was engaged.

The masts were shorn of all but their lower yards, but it was a pleasant sight to see the stout wooden topmasts with their attendant fittings instead of our more modern pole lower masts and topmasts in one. The truss for the main

yard was a delicately wrought piece of ironwork with a second truss bow looping in to the mast so that the topmasts could be lowered through it without disturbing the lower yards. The yards themselves were slung by a long chain that extended halfway up the mastheads and were supported by a thumb cleat behind.

Of course STAR OF INDIA was equipped with a jib boom and a marvelously long affair it was. (Moreover she had whisker booms forged of iron projecting from either cathead to spread the guys.) The figurehead is small and there is a disturbing and rather ugly gap between it and the beakhead. When I got back to the hotel I studied this on the enlargement from New Zealand and discovered that this gap was concealed originally by a graceful set of hair rails — the ultimate in decorations — at the forward end of the ship. How fine they would look restored!

The lower hold was dry, and free of ballast; that is, she is ballasted in between the floors and wooden sheathing laid over it. Here were the spars that the Navy sent down many years ago, great piles of tarred rigging with deadeyes interwoven in the mass, an ornamental old bucket rack and the like. I probed at the rust on her plating behind the sweatbands and found that it fell away like powder and left smooth plating. At the heel of each mast was a manhole with a perforated plate bolted over it. I scratched the interior of the masts and found the same condition. The outside of the hull has heavy scale in many places, but the plates are at least three quarters of an inch thick — I had always heard of vessels so constructed but never actually expected to find one still around. I went aft and peered down into a mysterious looking afterpeak with odds and ends of gear in the bottom. Right aft are the timber ports that J. J. Moore cut and so square across is she back here, that barely twenty-five degrees of angle separated the two ports from being in a flat plane. The tuck of an old India-man, and indeed India first received her on a maiden voyage that ended the same year that, over here, General Sherman went marching through Georgia. ∴



"A legend in his own time," master rigger Jack Dickerhoff — here aboard the INDIA in 1962 — later rrigged the FALLS OF CLYDE in Honolulu.





Captain Frank Weidemann was master of the STAR OF INDIA from 1919 to 1923. Jack Dickerhoff was second mate with Weidemann on the last voyage of the barkentine CENTENNIAL (1927-28) and describes him: "He was a fine man, Frank Weidemann, no airs, knew his business; stood six feet in his socks. I can see him now down the skylight, hands behind his back, marching up and down the long saloon to some old German march he used to play on his gramophone. He was happy to be in sail again." — photo by Jerry MacMullen

L'envoi . . .

When I wrote the above, I had been summoned down to San Diego by a group formed around the ship to write a survey for her restoration. Jerry MacMullen, marine historian and the bark's guardian angel ever since she was towed to San Diego in 1926, had contrived to wake San Diego up to the rarity it had on its doorstep — he pointed out that the former STAR OF ALASKA had been bought (in 1954), restored, rerigged, and, perhaps most importantly, fitted with three decks of exhibits by the San Francisco Maritime Museum.

MacMullen saw his chance when, in 1957, San Diego had a visit from Alan Villiers, the noted lecturer and Cap Horner, who had just brought the MAYFLOWER II across the Atlantic. At the end of his lecture, Captain Villiers found Jerry MacMullen at his elbow. Jerry suggested a visit to STAR OF INDIA next morning. The jovial Villiers agreed — and was a bit surprised when he climbed her rotting gangplank, to be greeted by John Bunker, the waterfront reporter for San Diego's *Evening Tribune*, and a photographer from the newspaper. The result was, on page one of the *Tribune* that day, a three-column cut of a scowling Villiers looking down from the break of the foc's'le, and over it the caption:

"She's a Bloody Mess."

"When I was eight or nine, we were spending the winter in San Diego and we went down to the STAR OF INDIA on Christmas of 1932. We went on board and there was nothing on it. We just went down and down into the hold. Nothing was there but a great cavernous hold."

Janet Barrett



Jerry MacMullen in the hold of the INDIA before restoration.

Below it was an interview giving Captain Villiers' blunt views on the kind of a city which would let a lovely old lady go to pot in such a manner.

"She'd take a lot of work," he concluded, "and a lot of money. But London restored the famous clipper ship CUTTY SARK and San Francisco restored the old sailing ship BALCLUTHA."

"They're both packing tourists in and paying for themselves."

All this aroused the interest of Port Director John Bate. A campaign was put together, with attorney Jack Donnelley (who as a boy had made a voyage to Alaska in the down-easter ORIENTAL) willing to take on the crucial task of fund raising.

Not long after I turned in my survey a remarkable man arrived on the scene in the person of Captain Kenneth Reynard. The physical restoration of the STAR OF INDIA soon revolved around his energies and talents. Reynard led a crew of a few professionals and many amateurs and showed them how to do the work with his own hands — he is sailmaker, rigger, shipwright, marine artist, navigation instructor, and ship master. Throughout the early 1960's, San Diego closed ranks behind these men and the old bark revived spectacularly from the shadow of extinction.

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## STAR OF INDIA Leaves Oakland Creek

The year is 1927. The STAR OF INDIA has been bought by the Zoological Society of San Diego, and will shortly be towed down the coast as far as San Pedro by the steam schooner WAPAMA (now preserved in the historic ship fleet of the National Maritime Museum at San Francisco). She was towed from San Pedro to San Diego by the U.S.S. TERN, on orders of a sympathetic Navy admiral.

The Viking ship being set aboard by the Smith-Rice crane barge was built in the Alaska Packers shipyard in Alameda for the 1915 World's Fair at San Francisco. Following is a description by Axel Widerstrom, son of Captain John Widerstrom, master of STAR OF FRANCE, STAR OF HOLLAND, STAR OF FALKLAND and STAR OF ZEALAND.

"That Viking ship was of lapstrake construction and had

a lot of beam — lots of freeboard. She was built by two Swedish ship's carpenters, Nels Olson and John Schablum, under the supervision of Halse, the yard superintendent. He was a Norwegian and probably had the plans sent from Norway.

"On 'Scandinavian Day' at the Fair, the Viking ship was towed over to the San Francisco side of the bay by the yard fireboat, the PHOENIX. She let her go in the yacht harbor and the 'Vikings' picked up the oars. The ship was manned by a crew of Alaska Packer ship captains, with horns and swords and dressed up like real Vikings. Shields and everything. My father was one of them. They rowed that boat with long oars to the Fair for formal ceremonies. I imagine they had a bottle aboard to take a few nips out of. She had a primitive outboard rudder and was hard to





## Week for the Last Time

handle. Anyway, they managed to tie her up and then they all marched up to the Swedish Building.

"The Viking ship was later loaded on a flatbed truck and driven up Market Street. This was for a Portola Festival night parade in connection with the Fair. All the sea captains were aboard in their Viking outfits.

"After the parade, the boat was taken back to the shipyard at the foot of Paru Street and a canvas cover put over it. It was there from 1915 until 1927 when they loaded it onto the STAR OF INDIA to go to San Diego. My father told me how they took the canvas off and put the boat on a lighter to take it off to the INDIA. I heard that the Viking ship was put ashore in San Diego and later some vandals burned it. It was probably a white elephant by then."

— photo from National Maritime Museum at San Francisco

## On the Reef at Kahului

(As reported in the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, Honolulu)

Tuesday, 18 September 1900.

The little island steamer MOKOLII arrived in port early yesterday morning with the news that the American ship EUTERPE, formerly a Hawaiian ship was ashore near Kahului having gone on the reef while trying to make port on Sunday morning after a passage of 68 days from Newcastle with a big load of coal.

The only reason evident for the accident is that of sailing too close into the land. After she had struck, soundings were made fore and aft and it was found that there was plenty of water around the vessel. She had struck a coral mound, a small hard bed which held her fast. This was the case of the DUNREGGAN off Diamond Head. As it is now, some of the EUTERPE's coal will have to be dumped overboard before she can be pulled off, at least that is what the wise ones say.

It is said that the EUTERPE struck at about half past 9 o'clock on Sunday morning as she was passing Kuau, on her way to Kahului. At Kuau, there is no harbor nor any protection from the trades, the force of which will drive the vessel farther inshore unless help arrives before it is too late.

The first mate of the EUTERPE, on his arrival here yesterday morning aboard the MOKOLII, proceeded to make arrangements for a tug to go to Kahului to pull the vessel off the reef; there was some talk of getting the inter-island steamer CLAUDINE to go but the matter ended finally by the mate taking the powerful tug FEARLESS to the scene of disaster.

It was rumored on the waterfront that the FEARLESS practically ran away with the mate, that the agents were making other arrangements but were fore-stalled by the quick action of the tugboat men. The FEARLESS seems bound to live up to the enviable reputation she established for herself on her arrival here from the coast when she yanked the DUNREGGAN off the Diamond Head reef with the help of the IROQUOIS and ELEU.

The EUTERPE is an iron ship of 1197 tons, commanded by Capt. Saxe who is well known in Honolulu. She has been to these islands many times. She left Newcastle July 10th with a cargo of coal for Hackfeld and Co.

The steamer LEHUA which sailed for Maui yesterday afternoon took along a gasoline engine to be used in discharging the EUTERPE. It will be remembered that the bark COLUSA, since lost off Sitka, went aground about the same spot where the EUTERPE now lies.

### FEARLESS SAVED SHIP Towed EUTERPE safe to Honolulu Alone and Unaided, the Spreckels Tug Accomplishes a Difficult Task

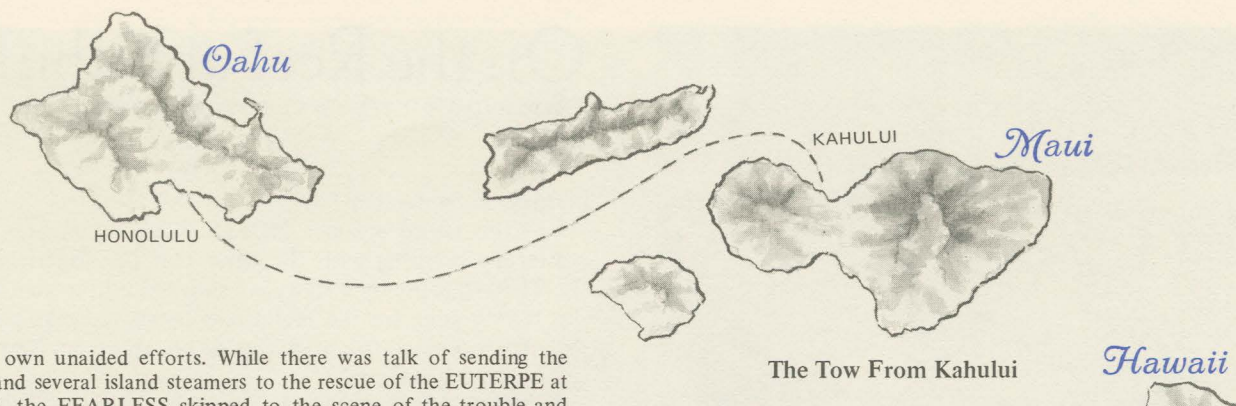
#### THE SHIP EUTERPE IS OFF THE REEF SPRECKELS' POWERFUL TUG FEARLESS DID IT!

Wednesday, 19 September 1900

Captain Brokaw of the FEARLESS is now having his horoscope cast. He wants to know how many more ships he will yank off the coral which fringes these glorious islands in the next few months. He pulled the DUNREGGAN off the Diamond Head reef last month, and early yesterday morning he made the EUTERPE jump her rocky bed near Kahului.

In the DUNREGGAN case the IROQUOIS and ELEU assisted the FEARLESS. In the present instance, the FEARLESS did all the work by herself and saved a valuable vessel with a big cargo of coal





by her own unaided efforts. While there was talk of sending the ELEU and several island steamers to the rescue of the EUTERPE at Kahului, the FEARLESS skipped to the scene of the trouble and saved the day.

Last night about 6 o'clock the FEARLESS came into this harbor with the EUTERPE in tow and left her at anchor, safe and comparatively sound in the stream.

About an hour before this the ELEU heard that the EUTERPE was coming and hurried out of the harbor to bring her in. After getting out as far as the bell buoy, however, she saw the FEARLESS coming along with the EUTERPE at the end of a line and so put back into the harbor.

A rumor got around the waterfront that the FEARLESS was returning. Many people not acquainted with the great power of the tug and the stick-to-it-iveness of Capt. Brokaw thought at first that the FEARLESS had given up the job or that the EUTERPE had drifted ashore near KAHULUI and gone to pieces. They were much surprised when they found that although the FEARLESS was indeed returning, she was bringing the EUTERPE with her.

The EUTERPE went ashore about 9 o'clock Sunday morning. She had all sail set when she struck and as far as Capt. Saxe was able to observe, it was all clear sailing. The steamer MOKOLII was at Kahului at the time of the accident and immediately went to the ship's assistance.

About 1 o'clock Sunday afternoon the MOKOLII got a line on EUTERPE and tugged away bravely for about an hour. The MOKOLII was by no means powerful enough however to make any impression, and at 2 o'clock she started for Honolulu with the EUTERPE's first mate to get assistance. Before she left she saw to it that the EUTERPE was held from drifting any further inshore by leaving one of the steamer's anchors out with a five inch line attached.

#### Kedge Anchor Fails

Captain Saxe also ran ninety fathoms of wire attached to the largest kedge he had aboard. To this he attached an eight inch line. But when the breeze sprang up later the lines parted and the EUTERPE went further onto the reef.

The MOKOLII arrived in Honolulu about 4 o'clock Monday morning. The first mate of the EUTERPE went at once to the captain of the FEARLESS. The FEARLESS first towed the ship GREAT ADMIRAL\* into the harbor from where she had been lying outside and then she was ready to hasten to the rescue of the stranded vessel from Newcastle.

She left Honolulu about 9 o'clock Monday morning with the EUTERPE's mate aboard and arrived at the scene of the trouble at about 5 o'clock in the afternoon of the same day. Half an hour later the FEARLESS had a brand new 14 inch manila line attached to the EUTERPE and commenced tugging away with all her great strength. The FEARLESS did not pull steadily, but pulled at intervals with a sudden jerk, with the intention of jerking or jumping the vessel off the coral reef.

Unlike the DUNREGGAN case, there was no preliminary argument concerning terms. The EUTERPE needed help and needed it very badly and the FEARLESS simply handed her a line and pulled.

When the tug began pulling, the EUTERPE's crew began to jettison her cargo. They commenced to throw the coal from the starboard side overboard first so as to give the vessel a list to port. Brokaw thought that in this manner it would be easier to get her afloat again.

\* The GREAT ADMIRAL was 42 days from Newcastle, also with coal. Captain E.R. Sterling, owner and master, usually sailed with his wife and children aboard.

All Monday night the FEARLESS kept up her jerking and at five minutes after 3 o'clock yesterday morning her efforts proved successful and the iron ship floated in deep water. At five o'clock the EUTERPE set sail and in tow of the FEARLESS started for Honolulu. The FEARLESS pulled her along at an easy speed, the ship's canvas serving to steady the vessel and ease the strain on the hawser. At dusk last night the EUTERPE was safe at anchor, leaking only a little and the FEARLESS was alongside her wharf while Captain Brokaw was figuring in a notebook concerning salvage. DUNREGGAN, \$20,000. EUTERPE, \$20,000? Wela Ka Hao!

#### Captain Saxe's Story

Captain Saxe of the EUTERPE came ashore about 7 o'clock last night. He told his story to an *Advertiser* reporter. He is not well acquainted with the coast of these islands and besides the charts show no reef or shallow water where the EUTERPE struck. The present charts of the Hawaiian Islands are very imperfect. Captain Saxe blames the charts entirely. When the FEARLESS reached the EUTERPE, she was hard and fast amidships. Her load-water-draft is twenty-two feet. She was then about one and a half feet out of the water and two and a half feet in the coral. She is an iron vessel and was pounding on the reef with great force. Every time she thumped on the hard bottom, her masts would shake and tremble violently while her rigging rattled ominously. Capt. Saxe did not sleep while his vessel was on the reef, he passed to and fro between the EUTERPE and the FEARLESS in one of the ship's boats. He thought at first that it would be necessary to jettison the greater part of the vessel's cargo, 1700 tons of coal. He was not acquainted at that time, however, with the capabilities of the FEARLESS. The EUTERPE was about a mile and a half off-shore and was in momentary danger of going ashore and leaving her bones there before the tug got hold of her. A strong Northeast wind was blowing at the time. After the vessel struck, all sail was quickly taken in. The EUTERPE left Newcastle on July 10th and was bound for Kahului when she went aground. She was towed into Honolulu harbor to be looked after should she have received any damage. Divers will examine her bottom today out in the stream.

Captain Saxe's wife is in Honolulu. The captain did not know where she was staying when he came ashore last night. A friend of the family had been entrusted with the address to give to the captain, had made a note of it on his cuff, but had by some strange chance changed his shirt and sent the soiled one to the laundry, and had forgotten the address.

Captain Brokaw of the FEARLESS was in high spirits last night. "When I got to the EUTERPE, he said, "She was shipping sprays in great shape, and doing her best to shake the masts out of her. I got a new manila line onto her, however, and about 3 o'clock in the morning I yanked her out of the clutch of the coral. The FEARLESS didn't have any IROQUOIS or ELEU to help her either. She did it by herself and saved the EUTERPE before she had jettisoned 50 tons of coal. O! The FEARLESS is the boss tug all right, and she's got the tools to work with."

Monday, 24 September 1900.

\$10,000 paid by agents of EUTERPE, H. Hackfeld, to Spreckel's Tugboat Co., owner of FEARLESS for salvaging EUTERPE. EUTERPE not leaking and may possibly go to Kahului for discharge.

(from Harold D. Huycke)



*Right:* With gloves, cane and bowler, Captain Thomas E. Bowling strikes a pose. In a matter of protocol Captain Bowling confined the chief officer to his cabin on the homeward voyage from Napier to London in 1891. — photo from Jerry MacMullen    *Middle:* Emigrants for New Zealand crowd the decks of EUTERPE as she lies to a buoy in the Thames prior to starting her long voyage. — photo by Gould, National Maritime Museum at Greenwich, courtesy of Robert Weinstein. *Bottom:* The bark STAR OF INDIA plunges along, now a hard-working salmon packet heading home through Unimak Pass in 1918. — photo from M.A. Ransom





# Jerry MacMullen, STAR OF INDIA's Guardian Angel

Now that STAR OF INDIA has given a shake and turned into a beautiful princess after being for years a squat frog with stumped masts on the San Diego waterfront, a nod is in order to the man who started it all . . . the self-same Jerry MacMullen. As a young newspaperman, who loved ships, he had the idea that San Diego needed a square-rigged vessel to permanently decorate its waterfront. This was in 1926. His idea stirred the imagination of various friends and they made a trip to Oakland Creek where the *Star* fleet of square-rigged ships was clustered at the foot of Paru Street. In the mid 1920s the owners of this wonderfully anachronistic flotilla, the Alaska Packers Association, were reported in the newspapers as preparing at last to shift from sail to steam.

In the fleet was BALCLUTHA (then STAR OF ALASKA) but, as it happened, she was to go north for four more seasons. The older STAR OF FRANCE, an iron clipper, one of the Belfast ships known as Corry's Irish Stars, was offered to the San Diego group for \$12,000. (With the purchase of the STAR OF FRANCE and three of her Irish sisters, the Alaska Packers Corporation had, a quarter century before, acquired the idea of renaming all their San Francisco based fleet STAR of this, or STAR of that. The wooden vessels kept their original names.)

The wooden down-Easter SANTA CLARA was priced at \$7,500. The iron STAR OF INDIA, already then very old — and very quaint — was offered the San Diego lads for only \$9,000.



Pipe in hand, Jerry MacMullen discusses the ship's condition with other STAR OF INDIA supporters. In the foreground is the mainmast, which on removal was found to be rusted through at the partners.

The delegation returned to the southern city. Let Jerry tell what happened:

"Well," said one of the group, "now that we have decided on a ship where do we get \$9,000?"

"That was, indeed, the question. Various well-heeled civic characters were discussed in a way to make their ears burn ('Him? Sure, he's got lots of it — and he's keeping it!' 'Who — him? — He wouldn't pay six bits to see Saint Peter ride a bicycle!') and a lot more of the same. Finally, in a lull — 'How about Jim Coffroth?' A hopeful look went around the little group. With his name as the first on a list of donors, there would be others who would make up the rest of the \$9,000."

James Wood Coffroth, "Sunny Jim" to millions of sports fans, was the head of the Agua Caliente Race Track in Tijuana. He had promoted history-making prize fights, and the number of down-on-their-luck sports world figures he had quietly befriended will never be known.

In 1909, when "Sunny Jim" owned a sports arena on Mission Street, San Francisco, he staged a notable bout between Jack Johnson, the black heavyweight, and Stanley Ketchel, middleweight, but known as the "Michigan Assassin." At the time of the fight with Johnson, the Michigan Assassin's manager was Willie Britt, remembered for the phrase: "I'd rather be a busted lamp post on Battery Street, San Francisco, than the Waldorf-Astoria!" Another Ketchel manager was Wilson Mizner, the "Oscar Wilde of the Tenderloin," as columnist Charles McCabe describes him.

These were high old times in the city by the Golden Gate. Evelyn Wells dedicated her *Champagne Days in San Francisco* to James Wood Coffroth "who deserted a promising political career in San Francisco to become foremost sports promoter in the world." He had been a friend of Jerry MacMullen's father, managing editor of the *San Diego Union*, back in the gaslight days in the northern city.

We move down to San Diego and up to the year 1926. MacMullen's narrative continues:

"Dr. Harry Wedgeforth, one of the ship hopefuls, pointed at Jerry: 'You're it!'"

"A few days later, the luckless parent of the ship-happy reporter sat beside "Sunny Jim's" desk. A bit diffidently, he finally got around to what he was after.

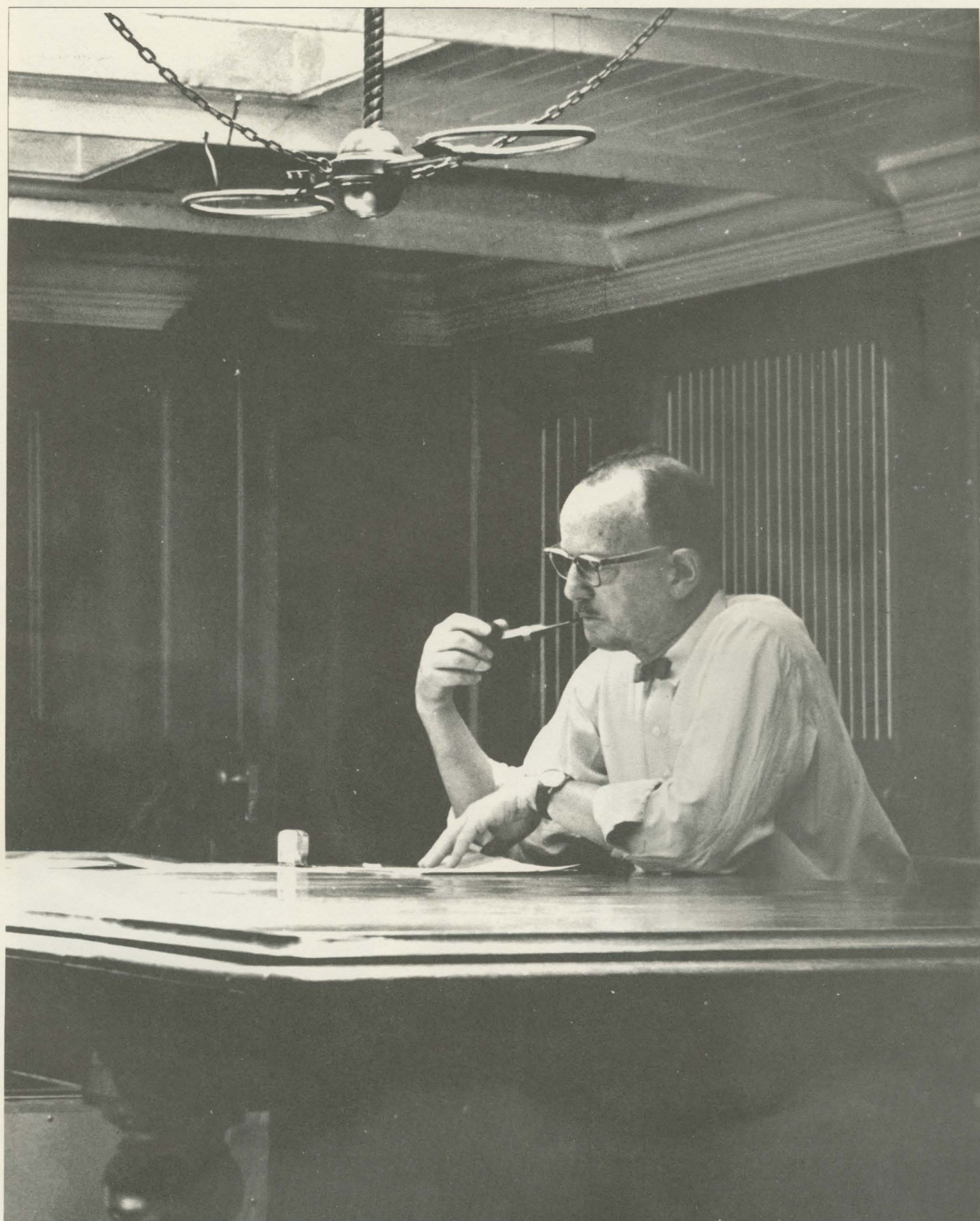
"He outlined briefly the plan for a maritime museum built around an old sailing vessel, he told of the selection of the vessel itself and, at last, got down to brass tacks: How would he, James Wood Coffroth, go about raising \$9,000 for such an enterprise? For some moments, "Sunny Jim" was silent.

"There's only one way that I can think of," he said, as he slowly pulled open a desk drawer and got out a check-book. He scribbled industriously, then tore off the slip of paper and handed it to his self-invited guest.

"It was a check for \$9,000."

San Diego owned a square-rigger.





Jerry MacMullen at the saloon table, STAR OF INDIA, 1962.





*Above:* The EUTERPE, in her prime as a colonial trader, lies at the wharf in Port Chalmers, N.Z., 1874. — photo from Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, N.Z. *Below:* STAR OF INDIA, surrounded by a garland of admiring yachts, on the nation's two hundredth birthday. The bark was setting sail for the first time in fifty-three years. — photo by Joe Flynn, *San Diego Union*. Uncredited photos in this issue are by Karl Kortum.

